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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3724
INFO RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0458
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0113
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 5851

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 000779

SIPDIS

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STATE PASS TO NEA/FO, NEA/RA, NEA/IPA, AND NEA/ARPI
NSC PASS TO ABRAMS AND RAMCHAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [WE](#) [GZ](#) [IS](#) [QA](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: UAE TO AID PALESTINIANS, NOT HAMAS

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a visit to Abu Dhabi February 27-28, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met with UAE President Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed. The UAE leaders assured Abbas that they would not stop sending humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians. According to the Palestinian Ambassador-designate, Khairi Aloridi, they also promised him that they would come to the aid of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in April on condition that UAE direct assistance went through the Palestinian president's office and did not end up in Hamas' hands. The Palestinian ambassador-designate told us the amount of direct aid to the PA could be between \$50 million and \$100 million. The leadership made clear to Abbas that they did not care for Hamas. The possibility of a Hamas delegation visiting the UAE is not likely, DPM Sheikh Hamdan's senior aide and the Palestinian ambassador-designate said. End Summary.

UAE Financial Support for the Palestinian Authority

¶2. (C) Palestinian President Abbas met February 27 with UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah. Abbas briefed them on the current situation in the Palestinian territories and Hamas' election victory. The Emiratis pledged to keep up their humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians. Sheikh Hamdan's office director, Sultan al-Rumeithy, told Ambassador the two sides discussed the formation of a new government and Hamas' future participation in the government. Al-Rumaithy said that Abbas told the UAE leadership that Hamas did not appear to be as hard-line behind closed doors as they appeared to be on television. The UAE took this as a positive sign of Hamas' intention to move forward. Abbas met separately with UAE President Khalifa February 28. According to participants, Khalifa renewed the UAE's support to the Palestinian people and Abbas thanked his hosts for their support.

¶3. (C) Although al-Rumeithy said he was not aware of any UAEG commitment regarding financing the interim Palestinian government, Palestinian Ambassador-designate Aloridi told PolChief March 1 that Abbas and Sheikh Hamdan had discussed the PA's financial situation and that the UAE promised direct aid to help pay salaries for the month of April. Aloridi said the amount would be between \$50 million and \$100 million, but both sides agreed that any funds would be channeled through President Abbas' office. Neither side

wanted UAE contributions to end up in Hamas' hands, Aloridi said. The PA has funds to pay salaries in March, he added, but it will require further outside assistance to cover April salaries. He said it was imperative that the PA be able to pay salaries of the Palestinian security forces. The UAE told Abbas that they prefer their money to go toward health and social causes. Aloridi expressed concern about Iranian assistance for salaries, an amount he put at \$200 million. Aloridi confirmed that Sheikh Hamdan pledged to continue sending humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian territories via the UAE Red Crescent Society, which Sheikh Hamdan chairs. We will follow up on the UAE financial contribution issue with FonMin Sheikh Abdullah when he returns from Riyadh where he is meeting with his GCC counterparts today.

 Hamas Coming to the UAE?

¶4. (C) Neither the Palestinian ambassador-designate nor our UAEG contacts could confirm rumors of a possible Hamas delegation visit to the UAE. Aloridi said the UAE leadership made clear their dislike for Hamas during their meeting with Abbas. "They would not invite Hamas to the UAE, that is certain," he said.

¶5. (C) Hamas will almost certainly visit Qatar, Aloridi said. "They have special ties," he noted. President Abbas' two-day visit in the UAE apparently was a last-minute arrangement. Abbas had planned to visit Yemen then Qatar, and decided that while he was in the region, he would seek meetings with the UAE leadership. Aloridi said the Emiratis appreciate Abbas, leadership and have long regarded him as a friend who shares their own moderate political viewpoints. In contrast, the Emiratis have no desire to meet with Hamas and they disagree with their ideology.

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 Palestinian Ambassador-designate Anti-Hamas

¶6. (C) Aloridi, a Fatah member who arrived in the UAE one month ago, opined that the UAEG could never dialogue with either of the Hamas factions)- the "outsiders" such as Hamas leader Khaled Mashal who has lived in Damascus, and the "insiders" who have lived in the Palestinian territories. While the "insiders" are more "pragmatic" than the "outsiders" in their political approach, all are "mutashaddideen" (extremists) and all answer to the Muslim Brotherhood. He added that Hamas received funding and "policy direction" from Iran, and "policy direction" from Syria. "We can't work with them," Aloridi said of Hamas. If Hamas cannot make a difference in the lives of the average Palestinian within six months, the Palestinian people will clamor for new elections, he predicted. Most Palestinians don't want female school teachers to be required to wear the "hijab" (head covering) and they don't want to see the Palestinian territories fall under the influence of Islamist forces the way Algerians did in the 1990s, he said. Under the current political system in the territories, Abbas still retains ultimate control over the government, which will become more apparent if he is unable to get Hamas to cooperate with him, Aloridi told PolChief. Aloridi said that Abbas expressed to the Emiratis his doubts that Hamas would agree to hold talks with Israel.

¶7. (C) The Bethlehem-born Aloridi previously served in Moscow as ambassador and also spent 12 years in Tunis with the PLO. The Embassy he oversees in Abu Dhabi consists of a cluster of older buildings badly in need of renovation. His office walls are adorned with portraits of Abbas and Arafat, as well as portraits of the late UAE President Sheikh Zayed and current President Khalifa. He would never take down the Arafat portrait, he told PolChief, because Arafat is too important historically.

